

HR Weekly Podcast

11/1/2007

Today is November 1, 2007, and welcome to the HR Weekly Podcast from the State Office of Human Resources. This week's topic concerns the need for agencies and their HR offices to effectively plan for a potential pandemic influenza.

As many of you know, health officials warn that the question is not whether we will have a pandemic influenza, but when. Most state agencies have emergency policies that explain how to carry on after a disaster, but few have a pandemic flu plan incorporated into their policy. Recent studies from the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control predict employee absenteeism to increase over 40 percent as a result of a pandemic influenza.

In anticipating the sickness of the majority of the workforce, agencies will need to consider revising and implementing policies offered to employees. South Carolina has a comprehensive plan to ensure we are prepared in the event of a flu pandemic. The State's current plan is located on the Department of Health and Environmental Control's website.

In the event of a pandemic influenza in the state of South Carolina, agency HR offices will be essential points of contact for state employees. State human resources offices will be required to determine which workers are essential to the operation of the agency; issues regarding sick, annual, and family leave; receipt of payroll checks; temporary staffing needs; employees working from home; increased work hours; and various employee health and safety concerns. When implementing an influenza pandemic plan in an agency, it may prove helpful to incorporate the plan in an existing emergency preparedness policy.

The Office of Human Resources has updated its website with a reference sheet that may be used by state human resources offices to evaluate their current pandemic influenza plans and to consider the role of HR offices in the overall planning process. The issues listed in the reference sheet are not all-inclusive, but represent examples of concerns that state human resources offices should consider when planning for a pandemic influenza or other types of workplace crises.

The updated pandemic influenza HR reference sheet can be accessed on the Office of Human Resources website under the Employer Services tab. The website also provides other helpful links to both state and federal pandemic influenza plans, policies, and resources.

If you have any questions on preparing your agency for a pandemic flu crisis, please call your Human Resources Consultant at 737-0900.

Thank you.